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THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF

Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Schools

HB 5468, 5469, 5470

SB 316, 317, 318, 319, 323

March 2, 2016

My name is Dr. Karissa Niehoff. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Schools. Our association provides professional development to school leaders in approximately 1000 member schools- public, parochial, charter and magnet- Pre-K through grade 12. Our association would like to offer testimony on the bills listed below.

SB 318- AN ACT CONCERNING PRIVATE SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

We oppose this bill as we do not believe boards of education should be required to provide transportation services to students who do not attend public schools within the school district. Mandating such services without full reimbursement would place an undue fiscal burden on school districts. Implementation challenges such as lack of vehicles or personnel could also arise.

SB 323- AN ACT CONCERNING UNSUBSTANTIATED ALEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

We support this bill as serves to protect the professional reputation and status of falsely accused school employees. It is difficult enough- in any profession- for someone to endure the public scrutiny and embarrassment that comes with an investigation into such serious accusations; to also be subject to potential professional discrimination- even if proven innocent- is an additional burden.

HB 5469- AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENT DATA PRIVACY

We support this effort to protect student data from unauthorized and inappropriate uses and users. A huge concern for schools is how service providers use or don't use data, and in what situations they're held accountable. We believe that the right environment for providers is one in which their software or applications are tailored to students' learning experiences, and in which they can suggest other educational services based on children's data, without allowing that data to be used for things that have nothing to do with education (advertisements, apps, etc.) Beyond focusing on service providers, we need to be sure that intra-district use of student information advances the work of student learning without compromising personal privacy.

HB 5470- AN ACT CONCERNING A PILOT PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL INTERESTED IN PURSUING A COLLEGE DEGREE IN EDUCATION

This is a terrific idea. While our student population is approaching "majority minority" status, (42% in 2013-14) the population of minority educators in the state has held at approximately 8% for years. This bill supports the SDE Equity Plan and minority teacher recruitment efforts. A recently published study in *Economics of Education Review*, followed 2.9 million public school students in Florida over a seven-year time period. Researchers examined whether their test scores changed in response to their teacher assignment. Standardized test scores in years when they had a teacher of the same ethnicity were compared to scores in school years when they did not. The study was able to account for other factors that might explain differences in student achievement -- things like poverty status, English language proficiency, gender, average teacher quality, and prior year test scores. The findings include:



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-- Black, white, and Asian students benefit from being assigned to a teacher that looks like them. Their test scores go up in years when their teacher shares their ethnicity, compared to years when their teacher has a different ethnicity.

-- Effects are generally largest for elementary-aged students and students who are lower-performing.

-- Elementary-aged Black students seem to particularly benefit from demographically-similar teachers.

Given these findings, it is certainly possible that the "diversity gap" is a contributing factor to the achievement gap, and efforts to recruit minority teachers may be part of the solution.

SB 317- AN ACT CONCERNING DYSLEXIA

We support this bill. Many organizations that support training in dyslexia suggest that remediating dyslexia requires training beyond what most teacher preparation programs offer. They say that while not all teachers in a school or district need to have certification, those teaching in areas with many students who have significant needs may opt to become fully certified. Interventionists, reading specialists and special education teachers should become certified at the teaching level or equivalent in order to fully meet the needs of dyslexic and learning disabled students.

SB 316- AN ACT CONCERNING THE POSTING OF CARELINE INFORMATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We support this bill and encourage the inclusion of language addressing regular review of board of education policy regarding reporting of suspected abuse or neglect. Such policy is important to maintain adherence to protocols and appropriate response to abuse and neglect situations.

HB 5468- AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO THE RECRUITMENT OF MANUFACTURING TEACHERS

We strongly support this bill and all that a task force might do to support not just the hiring of manufacturing teachers, but also manufacturing programs such as those in the CT Technical High School System. According to Connecticut's Economic Development Strategy (Spring 2014) Connecticut ranks 9th in the world for manufacturing and 3rd in the world for the most educated work force. We are concerned, however, that current openings for manufacturing teachers in our schools will not be filled. *Manufacturing the future: The next era of global growth and innovation*, a major report from the McKinsey Global Institute, presents a clear view of how manufacturing contributes to the global economy today and how it will probably evolve over the coming decade. The findings include the following points:

- Manufacturing's role is changing. The way it contributes to the economy shifts as nations mature: in today's advanced economies, manufacturing promotes innovation, productivity, and trade more than growth and employment. In these countries, manufacturing also has begun to consume more services and to rely more heavily on them to operate.
- Manufacturing is not monolithic. It is a diverse sector with five distinct groups of industries, each with specific drivers of success.
- Manufacturing is entering a dynamic new phase. As a new global consuming class emerges in developing nations, and innovations spark additional demand, global manufacturers will have substantial new opportunities—but in a much more uncertain environment.



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The CT Technical High Schools have a strategic plan- "Tomorrow's Framework"- with clear goals and a long-term plan for manufacturing expansion across the state to support current industry needs. The CTHSS is seeing results based on this plan. Our association strongly encourages the proposed task force to focus on the CTHSS plan and advocate for the fiscal support of the CTHSS programs and goals to grow manufacturing education in CT.

SB 319- AN ACT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION TO SCHOOLS OF PROTECTIVE OR RESTRAINING ORDERS AFFECTING STUDENTS.

We support this bill as it helps schools to have greater awareness of potentially harmful situations for students (emotionally and physically) and thus better keep students safe. Schools cannot necessarily rely on families to share information involving restraining orders as many families choose to keep such information private.

The Connecticut Association of Schools stands ready to support the Education Committee in support of these bills, and in efforts to implement policies, programs and practices that benefit ALL students in our state. Our association works closely with the SDE, superintendents, boards of education and parents. We can provide the expertise of practitioners and provide the Education Committee with feedback regarding the incredibly complex daily life in schools across the state.

Thank-you for considering my testimony.

